



Sheridan Japanese School

シェリダン日本語学校

November 9, 2012

AJ Grauer, Superintendent
Sheridan School District 48J

Dear Superintendent Grauer,

Enclosed please find the Sheridan Japanese School responses to your questions of October 22, 2012. Also included is additional information related to our responses: MAPS and OAKS test results growth, volunteer hour information, list of policies, and a CD of our 2011-12 Annual Report. We look forward to the public hearing on Wednesday.

Sincerely,

Dick Paay
Board Chairman

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Questions from the Sheridan School District 48J

1. What evidence can you offer that Sheridan School District (SJS) meets the State Goals for Charter Schools? The State Goals for Charter School

The Sheridan Japanese School (SJS) has fulfilled, and will continue to fulfill the legislative intent of creating exceptional learning opportunities by incorporating the laws, regulations, and requirements of a regular public school, and at the same time, offering students a unique and innovative learning environment.

Since its inception in 1994 as a magnet school, and the first year as a public charter school in the 2003-04 school year, SJS continues to rank in the top schools of the state year after year. Test scores exceed both District and State, and high expectations for students, parents, and staff are part of the mission and vision of the school. Sheridan Japanese School (SJS) is in Sheridan, Oregon, a rural town with a population of 6,165, with 53.6% economically disadvantaged and 77% First-Generation (parents without a four-year degree) parents in Yamhill County. Uniquely blending family atmosphere and academic excellence, SJS Charter School is a school where students who appear unsuccessful elsewhere flourish; students on IEPs learn how to take small steps to advance their education, and students who excel are pushed to take responsibility for their advanced learning. All stakeholders -- students, student council, parent council, board, staff, community members, and director -- believe that all students will be successful.

In addition to Japanese language and culture, students participate in rigorous studies of English/language arts/literature/writing, social studies, mathematics, and science. Students are required to lead, facilitate, and work with multi-age project teams to provide two exhibitions per year (one in the fall- language arts/social studies and one in the spring- math/science) which demonstrate subject matter competence through performing. SJS is a multi-level academically rigorous program that was designed to enable a wide range of learners to enjoy academic success. Students are encouraged to advance their learning at a rate that is challenging and rewarding for them. A profound student-family commitment to rigorous education is necessary, and parent participation is encouraged and expected.

The objectives of SJS are as follows:

- (a) To promote academic excellence through a rigorous academic program that equips students with the skills necessary to pursue the future of their choice*
- (b) To provide a safe, positive learning environment by insisting on high behavioral expectations and respect, thereby enabling students to learn at a rate and level that is challenging and rewarding for them*
- (c) To provide students with challenges that foster group efforts so they may develop and learn the necessary collaborative tools for the future they choose to pursue*
- (d) To celebrate the Japanese language/culture by providing classes and expectations so that students might pursue colleges seeking bilingual students as well as careers demanding multi-lingual skills*
- (e) To involve parents, students, and community members in the education process*

(a) Increase student learning and achievement

SJS strives to offer a rigorous academic program, exposure to extra-curricular activities, and an effective discipline program. All stakeholders believe that all students can be successful. At the end of each year, students receive awards for grades, participation, and improvement as well as for activities and volunteer outreach. Below are ways SJS shows learning and achievement:

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS & SJS GROWTH

The school has grown from 77 students to a maximum cap of 88 in the last five years.

The total number of high school students has grown and exceeds the expectation of 30.

The SJS wait list has students wanting to get in at most every grade level. Enrollment is capped at 88 students by the Sheridan School District through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in the 2011-12 school year.

GRADUATION STATISTICS

Between 2009-12 SJS had a total of 15 graduates. Eleven graduates have attended four-year colleges, two graduates have attended a two-year college, and one has attended a trade school college.

SJS has a 100% high school graduation rate.

OREGON RATING

SJS has received an 'Outstanding' rating every year.

In 2011-2012 a different rating on achievement netted SJS a Tier 2, level 4 rating.

In 2011-12 SJS received an 'Outstanding' rating.

TESTING ACHIEVEMENT

Implemented MAPS (NWEA Testing) in both the fall and spring testing times with 100 percent participation

OAKS testing at 100 percent participation (MAPS Results are attached.)

2011-12 testing results:

Grade 4 reading 67% District 54% State 74%

Grade 4 math 50% District 36% State 66%

Grade 4 writing 64% District 21% State 41%

Grade 5 reading 92% District 50% State 69%

Grade 5 math 92% District 35% State 59%

Grade 5 science 92% District 45% State 69%

Grade 6 reading 85% District 57% State 65%

Grade 6 math 69% District 56% State 59%

Grade 7 reading 80% District 65% State 75%

Grade 7 math 90% District 47% State 63%

Grade 7 writing 80% District 34% State 52%

Grade 8 reading >95% District 56% State 68%

Grade 8 math 82% District 44% State 65%

Grade 8 science 91% District 47% State 66%

Grade 11 reading >95% District 70% State 84%

Grade 11 math >95% District 33% State 63%

Grade 11 writing >95% District 41% State 67%

Grade 11 science >95% District 32% State 66%

The growth is visible in the above statistics. Students who commit to the SJS mission and vision from 4th through 12th grade make constant growth over the years. Of the three seniors who graduated last year, one received \$17,000; one received \$48,695, and one received \$7,050 in grants, scholarships, work-study opportunities, and other awards.

(b) Increase choices of learning opportunities for students

SJS is a place of choice for all students, staff, parents, and community members. Everyone who comes to SJS, or is enrolled in SJS, is making a choice to be a part of the high rigor, high expectations of behavior/discipline, and high academic challenge. SJS does have a high-level homework load, and all students are required to participate in project-based learning. The emphasis at SJS is college prep, self-directed learning, multi-age project learning, and Japanese language and culture instruction. SJS has a main Japanese class, and the staff also offer a Japanese culture and communication course for every student grades 4th-12th. SJS is a small school environment where students choose to learn Japanese and participate in school activities promoting Japanese language and

culture. A strong emphasis on choice of learning opportunities also involves volunteer work, school cleaning and participation in fundraisers, group activities, and community service.

Students at SJS have the following extra learning activities: student council, Lego Robotics, music performances, Battle of the Books, Taiko drumming, National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, National Japanese Honor Society, writing contests, computer science classes from a computer programmer, art, humanities discussion and writing with a retired professor, SAT prep classes, overnight science night, Japanese speech contest at the World Trade Center in Portland, field trips to the Federal Court house, and the John Day Fossil Beds (Mitchell, Oregon), 120 Minutes tutoring, Japanese Language Immersion camp, volunteering and more.

SJS will always be a small school where individual attention is paramount. All families, staff, students, and volunteers choose all choices of opportunities and learning curriculum and activities prescribed by the mission and vision. Families choose SJS for its high level of rigor and discipline. SJS is an opportunity for all students and families.

(c) Better meet individual student academic needs and interests

SJS requires three student-parent conferences each year. In the summer the OAKS testing and spring MAPS testing results are analyzed to discuss with each student and parent the reasons for student placement in their particular classes. Every class placement is decided by the staff, the student, and the parents. The learning style of the student, maturity, and expectations and/or the needs of the students and parent are reviewed. Based upon this input, the student schedules, the activities, the program are explained and questions answered.

In November students have taken the fall MAPS tests, and these results are also reviewed. At the fall conferences, every student and parent is expected to participate. Two staff members meet for a twenty-minute appointment with each student and his/her parents. Staff members type notes during the conference, and the student and parent receive a copy of these notes. The students discuss strengths and weaknesses in their personal abilities, and often discuss career choices and personal interests and goals.

In February the same parent conferences are held. The students, staff, and parents review the growth of the student, review the November notes from the teachers, and the student assesses his/her growth at SJS. This conference is usually one of individual goal setting.

(d) Build stronger working relationships among educators, parents and other community members

SJS is an international community. Every year SJS hosts at least one intern teacher from Japan. This year SJS has two Japanese teachers. In order to procure teachers from Japan, a network is necessary in order to gain visas, permits, State and Federal approval. This year the State Superintendent of public instruction, Rob Saxton, and the Japanese Consulate, worked together as an agreement between the state of Oregon and Japan. Staff members go to Japan for curriculum and culture training.

SJS staff is committed to working with parents, volunteers, educators, and community members. The Japanese Program Director works with Faulconer-Chapman once a week for the after school enrichment program; the summer Japanese immersion camp is open to all community members. Students from other states and other parts of Oregon attend. Staff members are involved in professional organizations. The Executive Director attends the Principals Conference, the Educator's Law Conference, the trainings for Common Core Standards, and other conferences. The Executive Director is a COSA member, NASSP member, and subscriber to ASCD as well as the Oregon Council Teachers of English, and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The Executive Director recently joined Rotary.

The Japanese Program Director is ATJO (Association of Teachers of Japanese in Oregon) Vice President; PNCFL (Pacific Northwest Council of Foreign Languages) Board Member; COFLT (Confederation in Oregon for Language Teaching); Board Member; AATJ (American Association of Teachers of Japanese) Member; ACTFL (American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language) Member; Presenting at ACTFL Expo 11/16/12 re: Designing a Successful Immersion Camp; Japan Society of America; Participation in Going Global a Social Network for Japanese Language Learning; Japan Foundation; Multiple Grants; JLEAP Participant

The Language Arts teacher is a member of the Japan Society and is involved in the Going Global Project. The science teacher belongs to The American Chemistry Society, National Science Teacher Association, and Oregon Science Teacher Association. She recently attended the AP biology training and Oregon Science Teachers Conference and will attend the AP chemistry training this coming summer and hopefully STEM training for middle

school in the CTE program.

The elementary/middle school teacher is on the ATJO Board as a Communications coordinator board member and will be joining Oregon Council of Teachers of English and performing the duties of COFLT Board member K-8 Representative

The math teacher currently belongs to the OCTM.

Staff members attend the Sheridan Japanese School Foundation Board meetings, and the Sheridan School District meetings. Parents and volunteers are invited to attend. The School Council is made up of parents who meet monthly to help promote SJS activities and fundraisers. One School Council member is assigned to one staff member for communication, needs assessment, direct relationship, and curriculum enhancement activities. Another aspect to SJS is the value of being a volunteer. All students are expected to volunteer. Four students per day help clean up after lunch. The Junior/Senior Honor Society students who qualify with a GPA of 3.5 or above must help clean up the local lunch meal site for elderly and needy persons of Sheridan. They also sign up to volunteer at the local library. Every senior honor society member is expected to lead a project. These include activities such as leading student council, coordinating local library volunteer time, leading a girl's club, leading a gender-sexuality alliance club, organizing games for the younger students during lunch on Thursdays, leading a big brother/big sister program at SJS, and other types of activities.

Another way SJS reaches out to the community is through community events. In the summer, the Aozora Gakkou summer immersion camp and staff put on Obon Matsuri, a summer Japanese festival. On Halloween, the school invites the community to an Open Halloween House with activities. In December, SJS sells wreaths and asks community members to donate wreaths for the Sheridan Care Center (a facility for elderly persons). Students also organize a Winter Holiday music festival. Also in December, the whole school participates in an all-school canned food drive. The food is donated to the local food bank. In February SJS holds a fundraiser called "La Sorella." The students serve a lasagna dinner and prepare music performances for the audience. In March SJS students hold a canned food fundraiser and money fundraiser for Doernbecher Children's Hospital in Portland, Oregon.

SJS had the privilege of going to Mitchell School District for a two-night, three day visit to the Painted hills. The SJS staff visited with the staff, students, and Superintendent in Mitchell, Oregon. Also, SJS helped the 86 students at Mitchell take part in the Undoukai (Japanese field games). The SJS student council is staying in contact with the student council of Mitchell. SJS plans on hosting Mitchell to the Willamette Valley. We are collaborating with Mitchell on rural, small-school improvement.

(e) Encourage the use of different and innovative learning methods

Every staff member at SJS is responsible for every student. The staff is small enough to discuss each student and discover together ways to adapt teaching for every student in order to create an individualized program. Some students need sticky notes for reminders or other organization help. Some students need to be asked if they have all of their materials with them before they leave the classroom. The staff is united and wants to help all students succeed. Communication, sharing, and developing a team effort for helping each student is what SJS is all about. As a specific example, one student is unable to complete her math homework at home; consequently, the staff made a commitment to make sure that this student finishes her math every day. SJS staff pride themselves on developing relationships with students which foster a love for learning.

The SJS staff help develop the school improvement plan. In the school improvement plan, teaching methods, focus on instruction, incorporating parents in the classroom and school, working with the community, and creating exhibitions, activities, and reaching out to all students' needs is discussed.

The staff works hard to try new ways to help students know their needs are being met. Elementary and middle school students want to let their energy out. One of the ways the staff adapts is to allow the students to "wrap-a-lap" (run once or twice around the perimeter of the school). Something as small as this makes a big difference for the overall good of the SJS community.

Some staff painted their student work tables with black paint and allow their students to draw, write math problems, spell, and do other classroom work as if their table is a "chalkboard." This has increased art appreciation, learning, engagement, and cooperation. Music, dance, art, and theater have been integral aspects of student work at SJS.

Socratic seminars, student-centered classroom teaching, and peer feedback are the main tenets of evaluation of student work at SJS. The Coalition of Essential Skills idea that the student is the worker, and high rigor drives the lessons.

SJS differs from other schools in curriculum. Students are placed in classes according to ability and

challenge level, not age/grade level. Also, all staff work together to create exhibitions which require students to work in teams to orchestrate plays, debates, science exhibits, competitions, and/or other project-based learning. The staff plan in the summer for the fall exhibition (language arts and social studies), and plan during the winter vacation the spring (math and science). Rubrics, activities, common core standards, leadership responsibilities, and over-all teamwork is graded. The community is always involved in the judging of the exhibitions. Groups are divided so that each group has every grade level represented. This multi-age environment permeates throughout the school from morning announcements to closing. Older students work with younger students on homework, playing in the gym or outside, and cleaning.

The school is divided into five advisories, each advisory having some students from each grade. Advisories discuss social issues such as anti bullying, John Wooden's 'Pyramid of Success' characteristics, study time, face-time with the staff, all-school activities, exhibitions, projects, etc. Each advisory competes for points for various activities: positive rewards (arigatous and yataas). Arigatous are given when students go the extra mile—doing something nice for the school, helping another student, cleaning, advising, teaching a student how to work on a portfolio, and tutoring. Yataas are given when families host staff and interns for home activities or events, volunteering such as painting a school mural, making billboards, etc. The advisory with the most points at the end of the year wins a special field trip.

(f) Provide opportunities in small learning environments for flexibility and innovation, which may be applied, if proven effective, to other public schools

The small-scale attitude of the advisory program is an effective tool for all public schools. Advisory allows the staff to connect with the students through academic exhibitions, discussions, grade checks, etc. The students choose their advisor (for the most part). Grades, team work, homework, discussions on behavior, planning parties, decorating, strategies for winning Undoukai, etc., are all part of the innovative environment at SJS. Students are engaged in their advisory classes.

Staff work one-to-one on Thursdays reviewing each math notebook, language arts notebook, and individual spelling list. Multi-age tutoring, mentoring, Cornell note taking, peer-editing, planner checks, portfolio development add to the SJS learning environment, flexibility, and innovation.

(g) Create new professional opportunities for teachers

The Sheridan Japanese School Foundation and the Executive Director created a budget with \$1000 allotted per teacher for professional development. This can take the shape of inviting professional guests to the school to do workshops with the staff, attending conferences, and/or taking classes to promote the curriculum or AP program.

The Executive Director and the Assistant Director/Japanese Program Director both take advantage of professional opportunities, even if they are self-paid. The SJS staff is committed to offering the highest level of education to all SJS students, sometimes at personal cost.

All professional development relates to the mission and vision of SJS. Most of the professional development is used towards improving curriculum instruction and integrating Japanese language and culture in all core class curriculum.

(h) Establish additional forms of accountability for schools, and

(i) Create innovative measurement tools. [1999 c.200 §1]

SJS does not base its success on the OAKS results or the results compared to the District or State. SJS reviews the SAT and PSAT tests and determines if SJS is competitive nationally. The Sheridan Japanese School Foundation reviews the survey taken by ODE, specifically SJS, and creates an evaluation form of the Executive Director and the direction of the school. All of the staff, School Council, and Board members review the survey and discuss areas of improvement and reasons for celebrating achievements.

SJS has been successful due to its continuity of mission and vision, and staff commitment to this mission; this is the SJSF Board priority. The original founders of the school are still in the community, and are still involved in supporting the school.

SJS receives 80% of the funding for 4th-8th grade (the majority of our students), and 95% funding for high school students. Due to the cap on enrollment, funding expansion is only possible through grants, donations, and capital fundraising. SJS staff only consists of five full-time teachers and a full-time Executive Director. Therefore, one staff member at SJS represents 20% of the total teaching staff. With these small numbers, statistical averages cannot apply. The SJSF Board considers one or two new staff members to be reasonable considering financial constraints. The essentials of SJS are entrenched; a key note to make is that within defining parameters, the quality of instruction is based on staff initiative, love of teaching, drive for perfection, and constant goal of self and staff improvement.

Financial stability, better job offers, and home location all impact the staff decisions for employment. New teachers are more likely to leave the profession entirely; on average, about 50% who enter teaching leave for good within 4-5 years. Also, as Sheridan is in a rural town, attracting and retaining staff members is a challenge. As a result, while it might be desirable to keep good teachers longer, SJS continues to focus on quality instruction in lieu of long-term employment for staff. Obviously, from the testing data, staff turnover has not had an effect on student achievement.

b. What process have you put in place to ensuring continuity of ‘Highly Qualified’ staff?

c. ODE requires all schools, even charter schools, to have Highly Qualified staff in core curricular areas. What process do you have in place to insure that all teachers are highly qualified that are assigned to core content courses?

The Sheridan Japanese School has referred to the District, TSPC, and the Oregon Department of Education for help in determining if a teacher is highly qualified. Ultimately, TSPC must review the documents of a staff member to determine if he/she is ‘Highly Qualified.’ All Highly Qualified staff has been replaced with Highly Qualified staff.

The Sheridan Japanese School Foundation Board attended a training at the District involving ‘Highly Qualified’ teaching staff. The hiring policy requires documents which prove ‘Highly Qualified.’

4. How do you plan to improve complaint resolution strategies?

a. What process do you have in place so due process occurs at all levels? (student, teacher, director, board)

The complaint resolution procedure is delineated in the student-parent handbook and in a policy. All parents have a copy of the handbook, and when a parent brings in a request, due process is followed. All parents and students sign the handbook, and all staff members have an employee handbook which describes the same complaint procedure. The complaint procedure is described in detail to all parents and students before the school year begins.

b. Parents who are not satisfied with the current complaint resolution process tend to register their complaint with the Sheridan School District 48J Superintendent who has no direct responsibility or authority to resolve the issue. Parents feel their concerns are not heard and that they are frustrated. Such complaints carry concerns.

All parents, students, and staff are informed of the complaint procedure policy before every school year. The complaint procedure does not mention, nor even suggest that the Sheridan Superintendent is involved in the process. The complaint procedure and policy can be amended to state that the Sheridan Superintendent is not

responsible, nor will the Superintendent listen to any complaints from those affiliated with the Sheridan Japanese School.

Since charter schools are schools of choice, all those affiliated with SJS decide to affiliate, or disassociate, with the school. The Sheridan Japanese School Foundation has not witnessed a meeting with anyone who completed the complaint procedure policy in the last five years. The SJSF Board has received letters and phone calls. Further, the Sheridan Superintendent has not notified the Sheridan Japanese School Foundation Board that complaints were filed at the district level. The amended policy could state that the Superintendent will notify the Sheridan Japanese School Foundation when complaints are brought to the district.

5. The study of the Japanese language is central to the underlying philosophy of SJS. What evidence can you offer that students are achieving proficiency in written/spoken Japanese?

As Japanese language and culture is indeed central to the SJS underlying mission and vision, Japanese language classes are compulsory throughout the career of the student at Sheridan Japanese School; each student receives two to four hours of instruction and reinforcement each day. While it is optional, SJS provides two college-level classes (AP and College Credit Now). Students are provided with numerous opportunities to explore and experience the Japanese culture, such as, but not limited to 1) interaction with native-Japanese interns, 2) participation in numerous sister-school activities, 3) participation in our annual summer immersion camp, and 4) weekly elective Japanese culture class. SJS also values working throughout the community to promote and teach the Japanese language and culture, through teaching students from Sheridan High School, teaching at the after-school program at Faulconer-Chapman, and leading Skype-based language classes.

In terms of proficiency-assessment, SJS demonstrates proficiency in several ways, including but not limited to 1) performance on the Advanced placement exam and College Credit Now program through Chemeketa Community College, 2) formative/summative quizzes and assessments (oral, written, etc.), 3) annual proficiency tests, 4) nearly 100% participation of SJS in an annual speech contest in which all students are required to write, perform, memorize, and answer questions about a 3 minute speech in Japanese. Additionally, for the higher levels (seniors), SJS prepares students for placement in college level Japanese classes (most graduating seniors are placed in 3rd year Japanese-leveled courses in colleges). Proficiency for the higher levels will be assessed by the STAMP test (2013) and the National Japanese Exam, nationally certified proficiency exams.